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A PIECE OF MISCHIEF.

Eddy then pressed it a little harder, I suppose, for I saw the child give a slight start, as if some mischief had been done, and then scramble from the chair faster than he had gone up.

Needle.

THE
STORY OF A NEEDLE.



GOLD ON A DARK GROUND.

"There are far greater trials than poverty," she said. "It will only draw us closer together. I can be happy in a very small abode, so that my dear husband and children are with me."

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THE

STORY OF A NEEDLE.

by

Tucker, Charlotte Maria

BY

A. L. O. E.,

AUTHORESS OF "THE RAMBLES OF A RAT," "THE YOUNG PILGRIM,"
"THE GIANT-KILLER, AND SEQUEL," "CLAREMONT TALES,"
"FLORA," "THE ADOPTED SON," ETC.

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I.

My Education.

 REALLY can say nothing of my earliest days except from report. I have heard, but I can hardly believe it, that I was once part of a rough mass of iron ore, that had lain for ages in a dark mine in Cornwall; that I was dug out, and put into a huge furnace, and heated till I became red-hot, and melted; that I was made into part of an iron bar, and when in a fiery glow was suddenly plunged into cold water, which changed my whole constitution and name, for iron was thenceforth called steel. I can just fancy how the water fizzed and hissed, and how my fiery flush faded suddenly away, and I became again quite black in the face! I can fancy all this, as I said, but I really remember nothing about it.

Nor have I any recollection of being drawn

out into wire, forced to push myself through little holes, smaller and smaller, till I was long enough, and slim enough, for the purpose for which the manufacturer designed me. My very earliest remembrance is of finding myself lying on an anvil, along with thousands others of my species. But you must not fancy me then, gentle reader, in the least like the neat, trim, bright little article that now has the pleasure of addressing you. I fancy that I looked uncommonly like a bit of steel wire, neither useful nor ornamental.

While I lay quietly reflecting in a kind of dull, sleepy doze, for at that time I was not sharp at all, a violent blow on one end of me startled me not a little—I had been hit on that side as flat as a pancake!

“What next!” thought I. I had little time for thinking. I was popped into the fire in a minute, but taken out again before I had time to melt. Then down came another blow upon me, which had quite a different effect from the first. It pierced out a little hole in my flat head and I received the advantage of

having an eye! No sooner did I possess it than I began to use it; I peered around me with much curiosity, now on the long brick building in which I found myself, now on the rough, care-worn faces of the workmen, reddened by the glow of the fire-light, now on the multitude of baby needles around me, all looking up with their little round eyes!

I was now placed upon a block of lead, and my eye was punched to bring out the little bit of steel which was neither tidy nor convenient. Then, to improve the shape of my flat head, it was filed a little on both sides.

I felt now tolerably well satisfied with myself,—something like a child (for I have since seen a good deal of the world) when it has mastered the first difficulties of learning, and begins to fancy itself a genius. But there was a good deal more of filing, and heating, and polishing before me; education is a slow and troublesome matter, whether to children or needles!

I am afraid that I should tire you, dear reader, were I to give you the whole story of


how I was filed into a point; how I thought the file hard, disagreeable, and rough, as many young folk have thought their teachers; how I was then heated in a fire till I grew as red as naughty boys who have been caned by their master, then left to cool in a basin of cold water, like the same boys shut up to think over the matter.

Then I and a number of my companions were held in a shovel over the fire, and stirred about, and then straightened with blows of the hammer. I thought that I must now be quite perfect; but never was needle more mistaken. How could I go through linen, cloth, and silk, how could young gentlemen and ladies go through the world without a proper degree of polish! Thousands of us were put on a piece of buckram, sprinkled with emery dust; more emery dust was thrown over us, and then a small quantity of oil, for I wish that every teacher would remember that though the emery of discipline is necessary enough, it works best when laid on with the sweet oil of kindness.

Oh! if I could only describe the rolling backwards and forwards, the rubbing and scrubbing again and again, the washing, the wiping, the smoothing on a stone, thought necessary to complete a good needle! Depend upon it, dear reader, your reading and writing, your sums and your tables, nay, even the terrible dog's-eared grammar, are nothing to what the smallest needle must go through, before it is fit to appear in the world!

II.

My First Adventure.

UR education being now finished, two hundred and fifty of us were packed up together, and remained in darkness and seclusion for some time. We were then removed, separated, and in smaller numbers placed in neat little dark-colored papers, and kept in a box in a shop. Of all the tiresome parts of my life, this was the most tiresome by far. I longed for the moment when I should be taken from the prison, and see a little of the world. I was quite discontented with my state.

“Why was I made, if not to be used?” thought I. “Why have I undergone all this heating, hitting, and polishing? why am I so sharp, so neat, so bright, if not to make some figure in the world?” I was only a young needle, you see, and impatience is natural to

youth; I was not the only one who finds it hard to stay contentedly in the position in which he had been placed.

At length I felt myself moved, (you know that I could see nothing out of my paper); I believe that I had been bought and sold, and though not at once released from my confinement, I felt reasonable hopes that I soon should be so. Nor were my expectations disappointed.

“Oh! mamma! dear mamma! what a sweet little work-box! and all fitted up so nicely!” exclaimed a childish voice near me. I longed to have a peep at the speaker.

“I hope that it may assist my Lily to be a tidy, useful little girl, such as her mother would wish to see her.”

“What a pretty silver thimble, and it fits me exactly; just see! you’ve left a place for my scissors, as I have a nice pair already. What neat, tiny reels!—and what’s this? a yard measure,—ah! and here is wax to make my thread strong! Thank you, dear mamma, again and again!”

I confess that I was rather in a state of irritation. Nobody seemed to be thinking in the least about me; after all my finished education, it was not thought worth while even to give me a look! At length my paper was moved, very roughly torn open, light flashed upon its contents, and I and my companions were scattered in every direction, I alighting on the Holland pinafore of a fair, chubby-faced boy, who had been the author of the mischief.

“Oh, Eddy! you tiresome child! if you would only leave my box alone! just see what you’ve done with my needles!”

I seized the opportunity of looking around me, in no hurry for my resting-place to be discovered. I found myself in a very comfortable room, full of so many things to excite my curiosity, that I felt as though I could have gazed forever! But perhaps what interested me most was my first sight of the human beings who occupied the apartment. They were so unlike the workmen to whom I had been accustomed, that I examined them

just as a philosopher might examine some newly-discovered curiosity.

In the first place there was a gentle, blue-eyed lady, who sat near the table on which the work-box was placed ; while on her knee rested a very plump little child, calmly engaged in sucking her thumb. A girl of about ten years of age (I knew nothing of ages then, and had not a notion of any thing growing, but I have since learned much from observation,) was on her knees, searching for her needles. She was evidently to be my future mistress, and I anxiously glanced into her face to read what sort of a child she might be. I scarcely knew whether her countenance pleased me or not. She had light eyes, like her mamma ; rather a turned-up little nose, which gave her a somewhat saucy expression ; and I am sorry to say that, just at that moment, I saw on her brow sundry creases, which did not give me an idea of good temper. I know that it is a foolish feeling of mine, but whenever I see those ugly creases rising on the brow of a little boy or girl, I always feel in-

clined to bestow on them a little prick, just by way of good counsel, you understand ! I have seen lines, and very deep lines, made on the forehead by care ; I could just faintly trace some on that of Mrs. Ellerslie ; they became only too distinct in the course of time, but they never for a moment altered the gentle expression of her face.

I think now that I hear her soft voice as she said,—

“ Oh ! Lily, do not be so much vexed with your brother. You know that he is only a little boy. Come, my Eddy, let us help to look for the needles ; you must not touch the papers again ! ”

I can not say much for Eddy's skill or industry in the search ; he was much more intent on making baby laugh by snapping his fingers and grinning at her, turning his head knowingly first on one side, then on the other, till he succeeded in drawing from her a merry crow, and a smile showed her little toothless gums.

Such success elated Eddy, and, determined

to press a good kiss on that sweet little mouth, he came close—too close to her, alas ! for he caused me to inflict, I am sorry to confess it, a very tiny scratch on the baby's plump white arm !

You should have heard what a scream she set up ! I really felt quite embarrassed ; was this to be the commencement of my career, was I to begin my services by mischief ? You must consider, also, gentle reader, that my astonishment was very great at the effect produced by my head simply rubbing against a child's arm ! I myself, though not a thousandth part of the size of the baby, had borne hammering, bruising, and battering, not only in silence, but with little inconvenience, and here the smallest touch seemed to excite terror and pain such as had never even entered into my fancy. Ah ! I soon found how very different the human species is from ours ; how easily their tender flesh is wounded, and—what I thought still more strange—how easily their feelings are pained ! It has seemed to me, from what I have observed in life, and


from what I have heard from companions of my own, possessing greater experience, that there are some human beings whose great pleasure seems to be, pricking and paining the hearts of those around them, as if life were not full enough of sorrows, without our wilfully bringing them upon our neighbors.

Eddy seemed much more penitent for having hurt the baby, than for having overthrown Lily's paper of needles, though the latter action had been the cause of the former. He joined his mother and sister in trying to soothe little Rosey, and assured her so often that he was "very, very sorry," and called her by so many sweet names, "little pet, darling, and duck," and kissed the scratched arm so often, that she soon appeared quite pacified. I was not so well pleased at the titles which he gave me, throwing all the blame on "the naughty, ugly needle," that had been the innocent cause of her pain. I was rather in ill humor when Lily hastily replaced me in the work-box, not dreaming of putting me back in my paper, but sticking me unceremoniously into the red

silk which lined the top of the box. And there I was to remain, in company with other articles of metal, with which I soon entered into acquaintance ; for all the metals are naturally related to each other, and I was able to make myself understood by every thing bearing the nature of a mineral.

III.

Conversation in a Work-box.

“ELL, what do you think of your new life?” said the Scissors, as soon as we were left quietly in the box. Perhaps I had better pause for a moment to describe my new companion, before I record our conversation.

The pair of Scissors, with which I had now to make acquaintance, had rather an old-fashioned air. One end was rounded, the other had been sharp, but a little piece had been broken off the point. I fancied that I detected on one of the handles something reddish, like a little speck of rust, and the brightness of the whole article was dimmed. This was doubtless a mark of antiquity, and it was in the patronizing manner of one who was aware of her own superiority, that Mrs. Scis-

sors repeated her question, "Pray, what do you think of your new life?"

"I have hardly had time to judge," was my reply; "but I am rather hurt at the way in which that little boy laid the whole blame of his own fault upon me."

"Oh! that is what you must always expect," laughed the Scissors; "a bad shearer never has good shears. I've been these ten years in the family, and I've always found it the same. When Miss Lily took it into her head to imitate the hair-dresser, and practice upon Eddy's flaxen poll, when I glanced aside, and snipped his little ear, whose fault was that but 'the stupid Scissors!' And when I was seized upon to open a nailed box, whose contents the young lady was impatient to see, whose fault was it when my poor point suddenly snapped? why, 'the good-for-nothing Scissors,' to be sure."

"I hope that I shall not be treated in such a way," said I, rather alarmed at her words; "it would be too bad, after the trouble that has been taken to form me, after having had

to pass to perfection through so many hands, to be snapped by a careless child."

"You would have nothing but the dust-hole before you," said the Scissors. I thought the remark very unpleasant.

"I almost wish that I had remained in my mine," sighed I.

"Oh, no," said a soft voice beside me, and I remarked a beautiful little Thimble, of a metal unknown to me before, so bright, and white, and shining, that I felt at once that it was of superior nature.

"Would you wish," she continued, "to lie useless, to be of no benefit to any? Has not man refined, formed, polished, improved you, and exerted the powers of his reason to render you an instrument of good?"

"What has man's reason to do with us?" said I.

"I know not whether I can explain myself clearly," replied the Thimble, "but I will endeavour to show you what I mean. Man has been gifted with a power called reason; by this he governs the world, by this he sub-

dues creatures stronger than himself, and makes all things combine to serve him. He has discovered that iron possesses a strength which he may turn to valuable account. It would be endless labor to plough the fields if the ground had to be torn up by the hand; it would be terrible work to reap the corn, if each blade had to be pulled off by the fingers. Man determined to aid his own weakness by that wonderful strength of iron. He made the ploughshare, and the furrows are turned up; he made the sickle, and the sheaves are gathered; huge trees, which he would never have had force to pull down, are laid low by a few strokes of his axe."

"There is no doubt but that ours is the most useful metal by far," said the Scissors, with something of a sneer. "Who would use ploughshares, or sickles, or axes of silver—precious little work they would do!"

"I grant it," said the Thimble, with perfect good humour; "but we all have our place in the world, we all have some good purpose to fulfil. Zinc, lead, tin, arsenic, platina, nickel—"

“Stop, stop,” I exclaimed, overwhelmed with such a list ;” I never knew there were so many metals before.”

“Nay,” replied the Thimble, gaily, “I have not numbered one half of them,—

“Manganese, cobalt, rhodium,
Copper, potassium, sodium—”

“Whoever such names bestowed on ’em,
Such long names I hold in odium!”

cried I.

“There’s rhyme, but not reason,” laughed the Thimble.

“If it is hard to number up the metals,” I observed, “how impossible must it be to count all the uses to which they are put!”

“Impossible, indeed,” said the Thimble. “Man avails himself every day, every hour, of the treasures which he has won from the mine—for

“Ploughing, digging, and hoeing ;
Cooking, ironing, mowing ;
Cutting, sawing, and sewing ;
Holding the embers glowing ;
Speeding the vessel’s going ;
Music, when horns are blowing ;


Money, when debts are owing;
Bridges, where streams are flowing;
Lace, where finery's showing;
Greenhouse where plants are growing—

“In short there's no counting or knowing
All that man to metals is owing!”

cried I.

IV.

A Mother's Delights.

“ EWING! how I hate sewing! I wonder what use there is in my learning to sew,” exclaimed Lily, in rather a fretful tone, as she took me out of the box.

“I wonder what’s the use of learning to spell!” yawned little Eddy over a dog’s-eared book, as he sat on a stool close by his mother.

Mrs. Ellerslie was busy at her desk; examining her monthly accounts, with a grave and anxious expression. She was interrupted, in the midst of summing up a long bill, by her little girl bringing her work to her.

“Mamma—”

“Yes, my dear,” said Mrs. Ellerslie, without raising her eyes, and continued murmuring half aloud, “Thirteen pounds and a half at

sevenpence-threepence — I thought there must be an error somewhere."

"Mamma, please will you lay down the hem for me!"

"Really, my love, I am very busy at present; I think that after all the trouble which I have taken to teach you, you might manage to do that for yourself," and again she went on with her accounts; while Lily, looking rather discontented, slowly returned to her seat.

"Mamma," said Eddy, rising, and laying his book on her knee, "I know my lesson."

"Wait a minute, my boy, I will hear you almost directly."

So Eddy waited cheerfully enough, and to amuse himself in the meantime, began trying to mend his mother's pen, to the no small damage of the pen, and the imminent risk of his own fingers.

"Oh, Eddy, put that knife down!" exclaimed the harassed lady, when she had raised her head for a moment, to see the nature of his occupation. "Come, you had better say

your lesson at once," she continued, hopelessly laying down the bill, and taking up the spelling book. She was too gentle, too loving, to be irritable or peevish, but petty cares and petty troubles were wearing out her strength, and damping the spirits which had once been so light. I saw that though Mrs. Ellerslie fondly loved her children, she could not help feeling them a weariness to her; and though they had much affection for their mother, they had little consideration for her comfort.

"Now, Eddy," said Mrs. Ellerslie, as the little gentleman stood with his arms pressed down to his sides before her, "how do you spell the word *pan*?"

"B, o, y," replied Eddy, with emphasis.

"Oh, fie! that's not knowing your lesson. You had better look it over again," she continued, as a servant brought in a note, with the words, "The messenger is waiting for an answer."

In the meantime, I was making my first essay in sewing; and though, I assure you, it was from no fault of mine, a lamentably bung-

ling essay it was. The hem laid down by my little mistress was in some parts twice as broad as in others, while in one place the edge was scarcely turned in at all. I was quite hurt at the crooked stitches which Lily forced me to make, and I wondered to myself whether she worked thus from stupidity or a wilful temper.

While the lady read and answered the note in haste, Eddy sat demurely on his stool, leaning his elbows on his knees, and his chin on the palm of his hands, as if buried in profound study. As soon as the servant had left the room, he came again to his mother with—

“Mamma, I know my lesson now.”

“What do p-i-n make?” said the lady.

“*Pin*,” replied Eddy; for which correct answer he received a smile and a quiet “That’s right.”

“And what do p-i-n-e make?” continued his mother.

“*Needle!*” shouted out the child with decision. Mrs. Ellerslie laid the book down on

her knee. "I'm afraid that I must turn you again, Eddy."

Eddy pouted as he took back his lesson, and before Mrs. Ellerslie resumed her accounts, she said to Lilly, "Let me see how you are getting on with your work."

Lily brought it reluctantly to her mother.

"Oh, fie! this will never do! Are you not ashamed of such hemming?"

"I couldn't lay down the hem right," said Lily very dolefully.

"Could not, or would not, Lily? I am sure that you can work more neatly than that; just take it back and unpick it nicely."

Lily colored, and as she bent over me again, I saw a big tear fall close beside me.

"Three and eight, nine and four," murmured Mrs. Ellerslie over her accounts. "Lily, hold up your head; you must not stoop so, my child. Eddy, do not pull off your buttons." She leant her head upon her hand; I believe that it was aching, and so Lily would have suspected had she looked at that pale face; but the young lady was gloomily pro-

ceeding with her work, and perhaps grumbling in her heart at the little task which she might so easily have performed.

It was clear to me that the poor mother was to have no peace, for again she was interrupted to pay the washerwoman, and had scarcely finished that small piece of business, rendered troublesome by not having enough of change, when there was a sound of crying from the room above.

"Is not that baby's voice?" exclaimed Mrs. Ellerslie, half rising from her seat. She glanced at Lily, probably intending to send her on a message, at least it appeared so from the movement of her head; but Lily had no idea of reading the wishes of her mother, and kept sullenly pricking me in and out, sitting as if fastened to her seat. Mrs. Ellerslie, therefore, took the shortest way of settling the matter, and herself ran up stairs to the baby.

Master Eddy took advantage of her absence to clamber up her vacant chair, and make himself acquainted with the contents of her desk. A very little care on the part of Lily

might have prevented him from doing any mischief, but whether from ill temper or inattention, she took no notice whatever of his pranks. When Mrs. Ellerslie re-entered the room, she found her ink-bottle overturned on the table, and a black stream flowing down on the carpet, which her little boy was attempting to stop with a handful of bills.

"Oh, Eddy, Eddy, what have you done!" cried the poor lady. "Lily, quickly run and call down the housemaid. I can not leave the room for a minute," she added, provoked beyond even her powers of endurance, "but some mischief is sure to occur."

"Mamma, I didn't know there was ink in the bottle, I only turned it up to see if there was any; but I'm trying to wipe it all up."

"Oh dear! the bills! and your hands and pinafore; just see what a state they are in! You must run up to Sarah directly!"

"I'll never do so any more!" cried Eddy, looking at his blackened fingers, and beginning to whimper.

When the housemaid had performed her

office, and the children had been sent up to prepare for their walk—happily the weather was not rainy—the weary, delicate mother again took her place before the table, and pushing aside the blackened heap of bills, which she had now hardly a hope of being able to make out, she leant back upon her chair and sighed.


“The children are too much for me!” she murmured to herself; “I really have not the strength to do them justice. I must ask Edward to let me have a governess. But no; how could I think of such a thing, after the hint which he gave me about expense, after his parting with his own horse and gig, and giving up the trip into Wales! He spoke, too, of the expense of keeping George at school! I am sure that there is something weighing upon his mind; shall I add to it the burden of my petty cares! No, no; whatever my dear husband finds to annoy him in the busy, bustling world, he must find his own home a quiet haven of rest. I must manage as well as I can, and always have a cheerful smile for

him ! One comfort is, that George's holidays are so near ;—my own boy, what a welcome he shall have !" and her lips parted with a pleasant smile, and the lines upon her pale brow quite disappeared, as if smoothed down by an invisible hand.

"This is odd enough !" thought I as I lay half out of the work-box, sticking in my unfortunate hem ; "three children are more than this poor lady can manage. I should have thought that a fourth would have driven her wild !"

V.

A Perfect Metal.

“ AM not very sorry,” observed I to the Thimble, “that careless Miss Lily has forgotten to replace our companion, Mrs. Scissors, in the box. Her manners are so sharp, her remarks so cutting, that I take little pleasure in her society.”

“She has a little speck of rust on her, I own,” quietly replied my philosophic friend; “but we must all learn to bear patiently with the weakness of others, and see that we keep our own metal bright.”

“You have no difficulty about that,” I observed.

“Pardon me,” answered the Thimble; “silver is not subject to rust, but it tarnishes, especially if exposed to impure, smoky air.”

“And was your origin as low as mine?”

I inquired; "were you also dug from the earth?"

"I was dug out of a mine in Norway; I have been, like you, purified in a furnace, and exposed to heavy blows of the hammer."

"I wonder how long it is," exclaimed I, "since man first found out the use of metals, and employed them in making whatever he requires?"

"The use of metals was known before the time of the flood, more than four thousand years ago. Tubal-Cain is the name of the first man who is recorded to have worked in metals."

"Oh!" cried I, "how much I should like to know who it was who first invented needles!"

"I daresay that the invention is of early date," replied the Thimble, "though the needles of ancient times were probably far inferior to the polished, delicate articles of which I see so fine a specimen before me. I have heard that needles were first manufactured in England by an Indian, in the reign of stout Harry the Eighth, upwards of three hundred years ago."

"Well," I exclaimed in admiration, "what it is to have a thimbleful of information! I shall always couple silver and knowledge together, the best metal and the best thing in the world!"

"Ah, there you are wrong," said my bright companion; "there is a metal far more precious than silver, and a possession even more valuable than knowledge. What is learning compared to virtue! what is silver compared to gold!"

"Gold! what is that," said I. You must remember that I was but a young needle, with little information, but eager to obtain more.

"Gold is what is called a perfect metal," replied the Thimble; "it is injured by neither fire nor water, and it is reckoned of great value in the world. It is found chiefly in South America, California, and lately in the immense island of Australia."

"And has it to submit to the hammer as well as we?" I inquired.

"It has much more wonderful power of enduring it than either silver or steel," re-

plied the Thimble. "It never breaks beneath the heaviest stroke, but it spreads itself out beneath it, and that to such an amazing extent that I have heard that a bit of gold not so large as a half-penny can be beaten out into a wire a thousand miles long."

I was not a little astonished to hear this, and I was still more so as the Thimble proceeded.

"Look around you and, even in this room, you will see wonderful proofs of the malleability of gold,—that is the name given to this curious property which it possesses. See the picture-frames glittering in the light, the shining pattern on the paper on the wall, the edge of all those gaily bound books; they owe their beauty to a layer of gold so thin that though that metal is one of the heaviest known, the gentlest sigh would have blown the leaves away."

"And is gold useful for anything but gilding!" said I.

"It is much used in various ways," she replied; "amongst others it was formerly much

employed in medicine, and is now used in giving a fine red colour to glass."

"And is this beautiful and wonderful metal also dug out of the earth?"

"It is procured in some places," answered the Thimble, "by washing carefully sand drawn from the beds of some rivers, which is mixed with particles of gold; but it is chiefly found by digging."

"Well, then!" cried I, rather triumphantly, "though silver and gold be both esteemed more perfect and more precious than iron and steel, man would have very little chance of gaining either of them without the help of a humbler metal! If silver be like knowledge, and virtue like gold, to what shall iron be compared?"

"To firm resolution," said the Thimble, thoughtfully, "without which man would acquire little of either!"

VI.

A Piece of Mischief.

THE next day I found that the lesson of work was to be omitted. Little Miss Lizzie Baker came to spend the day with my young mistress, who was, therefore, excused from performing her tasks; which, I could not help imagining, would be felt quite as great a relief by the teacher as by the pupil.

I was not, however, to be left in complete idleness. Mrs. Ellerslie entered the sitting-room in which the work-box of her daughter was kept. She was dressed in her bonnet and shawl, and seeing me close at hand, sticking in Lily's piece of work, she threaded me with a piece of dark silk, and mended a small hole in her glove. There was a great sound above head, as of little feet running about, and now and then a fretful cry from the baby. The

lady rose and opened the door, and then I could plainly distinguish a voice speaking from an upper room in the house.

“Indeed, Miss Lily, I shall never get the child to sleep if you make such a constant noise. You’ve woke her up these three times already!”

“Lily! Lily!” called her mother at the foot of the stairs. Whether her call was heard by the little lady I know not, it certainly was not answered, and Mrs. Ellerslie had walked half way up to the nursery before I heard the servant exclaiming in a sharp tone, “now do you be quiet, Miss Lily; don’t you hear that mistress is calling you!”

“You had better come to the drawing-room, my darlings,” called the gentle mother, “and then nurse can put poor baby to sleep. I am obliged to go out to make purchases, and to execute commissions for my sister; but I am sure that you will be good and happy while I am away; and do not be too noisy, my pets.”

So Lily and Lizzie Baker, a plump, dark-

eyed little girl, came into the room, and seated themselves on an ottoman, near the table on which my work-box was placed. Eddy followed, jumping step by step down the stairs, and trotting up to his sister said, "Lily, won't you let me play with you?"

"Oh, we don't want you here," was the reply; "we are going to have a quiet chat together. Just you amuse yourself and don't trouble us."

The little fellow turned dolefully away, went up to the window, and flattened his nose against the pane, looking after his mother as she crossed the street; soiled his finger by drawing lines across the glass which he had dimmed with his breath; then, tired of that diversion, tried to pull off the little twists of wool which formed the fringe of the curtain; and then suddenly making up to the table, laid his exploring hand on the work-box.

"There now, Eddy, you tormenting boy, just take your hands off," cried Lily, turning round just in time to prevent its contents being scattered on the floor. She roughly

snatched the box from the child, and giving him something very much like a shake, sent him half-crying to another end of the room:

“He is the most mischievous little monkey,” she said to her companion; “would you believe it, he pulled off the wig of my new doll!”

“I think that brothers are great torments,” observed Lizzie.

“Oh, not such brothers as George,” replied Lily; “he is always like sunshine in the house. I am so glad that he is coming from school. I have been counting the days to the holidays.”

“Well, that’s odd,” said Lizzie, “I always dread them. In the morning of the day when our boys return, I always think as soon as I awake, ‘Dear, dear, we’ll have no more peace in the house!’ They are so noisy, so rude, so troublesome, so fond of worrying and teasing us girls, I’m sure that it’s a happy day for us when the coach comes to take them back to school.”

“They must be very different from George.

I always am happier when he is with me, and it seems as if he made me better too."

"But he cannot amuse himself with you. Does he not like hocky, and cricket, and football, and despise the diversions of girls?"

"He does like cricket, and that sort of thing, and is a capital hand at it too, but he does not despise playing with us. I do not think that he despises anything but what is mean or wrong. You don't know how fond little baby is of him; and as for Eddy, he is never so merry as when he is at romps with Georgie, or listening to one of his stories. I don't know how it is, but every one seems more happy, and everything looks brighter, when Georgie is at home."

A funny fancy came into my head at this moment. I could not help recollecting what the Thimble had told me about gold,—how that metal, which is so weighty and precious, yet can be spread into leaves so thin as to brighten the paper on the wall and adorn the leaves of the book. I wondered if there were anything like this to be found in human life;

if the precious thing called virtue, which my companion had likened to gold, could also be found to extend to trifles, and in the smaller occurrences of life show its power to brighten and adorn. It was an odd idea, but it arose from what I heard Lily say that morning of her brother; and when I had an opportunity of watching George myself, it recurred to me again and again.

So the young ladies sat there chatting and diverting themselves for an hour or more, playing at cat's-cradle, comparing their dolls, telling stories of the past, and building castles in the air for the future. Eddy more than once broke in on their *tête-à-tête*, but was told to go away, and not disturb them. Driven to his own resources, the child rode round the room on a footstool; but this amusement was stopped, as being too noisy. He then kicked his heels for some time on the sofa, till, finding the occupation tiresome, he made the discovery of a little hole in a cushion, from which he managed to abstract several tiny feathers, which amused him for a quarter of an hour.

Then I watched him,—for no eye seemed to watch him but mine,—when he wearily sauntered to the other side of the room, and fixed his round eyes upon an instrument which, as I have since learned, is called a thermometer. He stared up at this, till his curiosity grew strong. He dragged, with some labor, a chair to the spot, and scrambling up upon the seat, brought his face to a level with the glass. He put out his hand and touched the round ball at the bottom of the instrument, examining it like any little philosopher; he then pressed it a little harder, I suppose, for I saw the child give a slight start, as if some mischief had been done, and then scrambled from the chair faster than he had gone up, and threw himself down on the floor.

Glancing up at the thermometer, I could see that the little silver ball had disappeared; but I was at a loss to account for Eddy's movements now, as, half stretched on the carpet, leaning on one elbow, he seemed to be attempting to pick up something which eluded his grasp, pouncing down his hand now here,

now there, and laughing to himself merrily all the while.

"I think it's alive," he said softly; "how funnily it runs about when I try to get hold of it!" and, opening his mouth, he stooped closer to the ground, as though to draw up with his lips the something which always slipped from his fingers. He was startled by a frightened exclamation from his mother, who at this moment entered the room.

"Eddy, my child! oh, don't touch that!—it's quicksilver—poison—it might kill you. Oh, what a mercy that I came just in time!" and weary, agitated, and alarmed, the poor lady drew him close to her bosom and wept.

"Mamma!" exclaimed the child, frightened at her tears, "I didn't mean—I didn't know—it looked so funny; I never will do so any more."

"Oh, Lily, Lily!" cried Mrs. Ellerslie, with something of bitterness in her tone, as both the little girls hurried to her side, "could you not have looked a little after your brother? If I had returned but one minute later, your carelessness might have cost the life of my child."

VII.

The Lively Metal.

“**W**HAT was that extraordinary metal,” cried I, “which I took for a ball of silver, till I saw the drops running about on the carpet?”

“Ha! ha!” laughed the spiteful old Scissors, which, speck of rust and all, had been replaced in the box, “you never saw the solemn philosopher, Mrs. Thimble, ever cutting a dance like that!”

“The lady called it quicksilver,” I observed. “Was it, then, no relation of my friend’s?”

“Relation!” again exclaimed the Scissors; “a relation that would eat her, rim, top, and all; make holes for her knowledge to run out of! Quicksilver is a dangerous neighbor.”

“Dangerous both to metal and to man,” quietly rejoined my learned companion. “Its

power can dissolve both silver and gold ; and to the human species it acts as a powerful poison."

"I wonder that they do not leave it alone, if it does such mischief," said I.

"Do you not know," replied my friend, "that reason and knowledge can find valuable uses even in those things which at first sight appear only hurtful? From quicksilver, also, called mercury, a medicine is prepared, which, under the name of calomel, has helped to preserve many a life."

"How strange!" I exclaimed; "medicine and poison, safety and danger, both from the same curious metal! But is it always a liquid like that?"

"Oh, no!" replied the Thimble; "mixed with other metals, it becomes staid and quiet enough. Look at that beautiful mirror in the gilded frame, which reflects every object in the room. To what, think you, does it owe its beauty? To an amalgam (that is the title given to the mixture)—an amalgam of mercury and tin, which lines the glass at the back."

“And makes it a pretty aid to vanity and folly,” said the broken-pointed Scissors, with bitterness. “If there is one thing which silly mortals like better than another, it is to look at their own faces in a glass.”

“If mercury has often ministered to vanity and folly,” said the Thimble, “I remember hearing of one curious instance where it served to mortify them both. A dashing lady, who was absurd enough to try to increase her beauty by covering her yellow complexion with a delicate coating of white paint, once visited a quicksilver mine. She must have felt it strange to find herself in that gloomy place, where the sickly miners, by the glare of torch-light, pursue their unwholesome occupation.”

“Why should it be unwholesome?” I asked.

“Because mercury is of that poisonous nature, that it is said that those employed to procure it seldom live longer than two years in the mine.”

“I should think that after learning that,” observed I, “the dashing lady would have a

feeling of pain when next she looked in a mirror."

"Probably she had," replied the Thimble, "but from a different cause. While she had been examining the mine, she little thought of the strange effect which the mercury would have on the paint which covered her face. She entered the place white like a lily; she left it black like a Negro!"

The idea of the poor lady with her black face mightily tickled the fancy of the Scissors, who wished that she had been there to see her. But my curiosity about the strange metal mercury was not quite satisfied yet.

"What was the use of that instrument hung on the wall, where the quicksilver lay in its little glass ball, till Master Eddy broke its prison, and set it free?"

"That instrument is called a thermometer. It is employed to measure the heat of the weather."

"I cannot imagine how it can do that."

"It is the nature of mercury to expand—that is, grow bigger—whenever it is exposed

to heat. At the top of the glass ball there is a slender glass tube. When the weather is warm the mercury swells; and the ball being too small to hold it, it is forced up the tube to a greater or less height, according to the amount of the heat."

"Then, if plunged into boiling water, the mercury would rise very high indeed."

"And plunged into ice, it would sink very low."

"Would it ever squeeze itself down into a solid?" said I.

"You mean, would it freeze as water does? It requires very, very, intense cold to freeze mercury; but it is not impossible to do it. I have heard the master of the shop in which I lay unsold for years, who was himself something of a philosopher, and from whose conversation with others I have learned the little that I know; I have heard him say that he has seen quicksilver frozen quite hard, so that even a medal was made of it: but it was not from the mere effect of winter weather."

"And, of course if any one had put the

metal into his warm pocket; it would have begun to run about again directly. The best way to keep it quiet seems to be to make an am— What did you call its mixture with some other metal?"

"Amalgam," replied the Thimble.

"Ah, yes! behind the mirror is an amalgam of quicksilver and tin."

"Like energy united with common sense."

"And taught to *reflect*," added the Scissors.

VIII.

Packing the Box.

THE next day's lessons passed over with the usual amount of weariness on the part of the teacher, dullness on that of little Eddy, and carelessness on that of his sister. It was with great difficulty that Mrs. Ellerslie could keep the attention of Lily to the tasks which she had to learn. The thoughts of the little girl were constantly wandering, now to her brother, now to her play, now to some project in her mind, while she tried the patience of her mother almost as much by the numerous little bad habits which seemed to spring up like weeds in neglected ground.

"Lily, do hold up your head!—My child, you must not stand upon one foot!—Little girls ought not to bite their lips!—What! you have been at your nails again!" Such were the sentences which, from the lips of the

anxious parent, constantly interrupted the course of the studies. I began to wonder whether little girls could find any peculiar enjoyment in biting their finger ends,—whether they thought it becoming to look hunchbacked, or merely delighted in teasing their teachers, and defeating the efforts of those who love them, to make them lady-like and agreeable. As I am a needle, and not a little girl, I cannot tell which of these three motives it was that influenced the conduct of Lily. If any of my young readers ever follow her example, I beg them to decide the question.

At length lessons were finished, and the tired teacher was free, but not to rest. Oh, no! but to pack up a box for her sister in India, which must be despatched before one.

“Now, my darlings, run up and get ready for your walk.”

Lily sauntered slowly up to the window; “Oh! I’m so glad! it’s raining fast!” said she. “I have something that I particularly want to do. See mamma, what Lizzie gave me yes—

terday!" And she drew, from a little pocket in her dress, a very small parcel, and, opening it, displayed to view a reel of bright, glittering gold thread.

"Very pretty; and what will you make of it, my dear?" said Mrs. Ellerslie, kindly pausing in her occupation of clearing away school-books and slates, Lily never dreaming of offering her assistance.

"I'm going to ornament a penwiper for George," replied the child; "don't you think that it will please him very much? May I stay here and work it beside you?"

Mrs. Ellerslie nodded her head in assent, but looked a little grave; perhaps she would have preferred being left for an hour in quiet, and had some idea what the permission would cost her.

"And may I stay here, too, mamma?" inquired Eddy. "I want to look at you packing all these things. Do let me stay, darling mamma!"

She could not resist his entreaty; so there he pretty quietly stood, watching his mother

as she hastily spread the table with various parcels, brown paper, oil-skin, a tin box, and string.

"Mamma," said Lily, standing on one foot, with the golden thread dangling from her hand, "don't you think that this will look well upon a dark ground?"

"Yes, my love," answered Mrs. Ellerslie, her voice half drowned in the rustling of paper.

"Mamma, do you think blue or green would look best?"

"I really cannot think about it at all just now. My box must be ready before one. Now, my Eddy, you must not open the parcels!"

"I was just peeping in a little, mamma."

"Don't come to the table, my sweet boy! Mamma is very busy indeed."

Eddy trotted off without saying another word.

"Mamma," began Lily again, "do you think that you have a bit of dark-blue cloth or velvet, whichever you please, to give me for the sides of my penwiper?"

"I daresay I have some up stairs in my wardrobe."

"Could I go and get it, mamma?"

"No; you know that I never allow you to search there," said the lady, who having lined the bright tin box with paper, was trying every possible position in which an awkward-shaped parcel could take up least room.

Lily remained silent for a few minutes, but without occupying herself with anything but the thought how she could persuade her mother to give her at once what she had set her heart upon obtaining. At length she cautiously commenced with "I am rather in a hurry to begin."

"I will look out the piece for you when next I go up stairs."

Lily gave a very audible sigh.

"This would be just the time for working," murmured she.

"I shall have no peace till I get it for the child!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellerslie, half to herself; and the too indulgent mother left her parcels and her box, to commence a search for

some small remnants of cloth, which, to judge by the length of her absence, she had a good deal of trouble in finding.

"Now do not interrupt me any more," she said, as she placed them in the eager hand of Lily, and turned, by more active exertions, to make up for the time she had lost.

The girl bore them off in triumph to her work-box; but here a new difficulty arose. She snipped off this corner and that corner, by the aid of Mrs. Scissors, but could not satisfy herself with the shape. Again she approached her mother at the table: "Please to make me a good round, mamma. I have tried, but I cannot do it myself."

"You can wait a little, my dear." Mrs. Ellerslie was pressing down the lid of the box, which seemed evidently determined not to close, and she looked certainly heated and tired.

Again I heard that naughty impatient sigh; again the tender mother yielded to importunity: the round was cut out, and a minute's peace secured.

"Where's the string?" said Mrs. Ellerslie, quickly, moving the box, lifting paper, glancing under the table. The lines on her forehead were plain enough now.

Lily was busily employed trying to force the bright golden thread through my little eye. I saw plainly that she could never succeed, and I felt exceedingly mortified; for what could be a higher object of ambition to a needle than to be threaded with gold? Lily saw that her mother was hunting and searching for the lost piece of string, but she never stirred to assist her.

"Where can it be? I'm sure that I brought some down! Where can I have laid the string?"

"Here it is!" cried Eddy, suddenly becoming aware that his mother wanted something which he had himself carried off. He had been quietly amusing himself in his corner, tying chairs, stool, sofa, and bell-rope together, with a liberal expenditure of string and a very large allowance of tight knots.

It was Mrs. Ellerslie's turn to be impatient,

as, hastily endeavoring to undo the child's work, she exclaimed, "How on earth shall I unfasten all this!"

"It's my harness, mamma, and these are my horses! Oh! are you vexed?" he added, looking up in her face, and reading, from her harassed expression, that he had again been guilty of causing her trouble. "I'm very sorry, mamma: I'll never do so any more!"

Even in the midst of her hurry, the gentle mother stooped down to give him a kiss. She had another hurried run up stairs to bring more string, for she had not the spare time to undo all his knots; but no angry word passed her lips. She let Eddy stand beside her at the table, even trusted him to hold a match which she had lighted, and employed him to ring the bell.

"I am so glad that it is done at last!" cried the lady, sinking wearily on the sofa, as the box—it was barely packed in time—was carried by a servant from the room.

"And I helped you, mamma!" said Eddy, proudly.

“I shall never manage this!” cried Lily, impatiently. “Oh! the tiresome needle!—stupid thread!”

“I am at leisure now,” said her mother: “bring your work to me, my dear child.”

“One would need a bodkin to hold such great coarse cord!” exclaimed Lily.


What a name to give to the most delicate, flexible thread which had ever employed the ingenuity of man to beat out from a single grain of gold!


“If you had waited a little, I should have shown you what to do. The gold thread must not be passed through the thick cloth at all, but be fastened down to it with a little fine cotton. Thread your needle, and I will show you the way.”

Oh, the patience and love of a mother! Alas! that it should often be met, if not with actual ingratitude, yet with that selfish want of consideration which receives every kindness as a matter of course, and never makes the smallest sacrifice in return!

IX.

Gold on a Dark Ground.

“F what a fine bright metal that box is made,” said I; “I should almost have taken it for silver.”

 “Your learned friend here would be shocked to be mentioned in the same breath with tin!” observed the Scissors.

“Far from it,” said the bright silver Thimble. “If usefulness to man gives value to metal, few can rank more highly than tin. England owes to it her earliest fame; for long before her flag waved o’er distant seas—long before her conquering armies trod foreign shores, while her fields were wild deserts, and her people barbarians, the Phoenicians sought her coasts for tin, for which her mines in Cornwall are yet famous.”

“Ah! I remember,” I observed, “that it is

when mixed with tin that mercury forms the amalgam used for the backs of mirrors."

"Mercury is not the only metal which unites in a friendly manner with tin. Joined to copper, it becomes bronze, of which those pretty chimney-piece ornaments are made; and pewter, so useful to the poor, comes from tin united with lead. It is also very commonly used to line copper pots and pans, which, without such a coating of tin, might poison the food which they contain."

"Poison!" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, many serious accidents have arisen from the tin lining wearing away from cooking vessels made of copper. The rust of copper is called verdigris; it is of a bright green color, and of a most poisonous nature."

"Ah!" said the Scissors, "that accounts for our good lady's alarm, when she found one morning, about two years ago, Master Eddy sucking a copper half-penny! A precious deal of trouble that young gentleman has given her. He's as active as quicksilver, and as mischievous."

"Pity that we can't make an amalgam of him," laughed I, "and teach the little rogue to reflect."

"He, Miss Lily, and the baby, are killing their mother by inches between them," said the Scissors.

I felt rather afraid that she spoke truth, when I saw how faint and exhausted the poor lady appeared, when at length she found a few minutes for repose. She looked so very thin and so pale, as she stretched herself on the sofa, when the light of day began to grow dim. She opened a book with gilt edges, which I had observed to be her favorite companion, and which my friend had told me was, as she believed, a great mine from which man drew all the virtue which he possessed. She read a little, until her worn, anxious face assumed a peaceful expression. She raised her eyes, and looked upwards; I thought that they were moistened with tears; and her pale lips silently moved, as if she were speaking to some unseen friend. Then she shut the book, and placed it beside her, and her blue eyes

languidly closed ; and she lay so still, so very still, that she looked as though she never would move again.

The sound of the opening of the outer door seemed to awaken her in a moment. She started up with quite a changed look, so bright, so animated, so cheerful ; passed her hand hastily over her hair to smooth it, and then ran out of the room : and I heard her voice below in lively tones giving a fond welcome to her husband.

It must have been difficult, however, for the poor lady to keep up a cheerful manner in his presence. I never saw so gloomy a man. It was in vain that she troubled him not with a single care of her own—that she spoke not a word of her failing health, her difficulties with servants, her troubles about the bills, her ceaseless anxieties with the children. I watched him where I lay beside my thread of gold ; for Lily's habit of filling her box so full, that she never even attempted to close it, gave me constant opportunities of looking about me, and seeing what passed in

the room. When the children were called down to see their father, the stern gloom on his face never changed. Even when his wife placed little Rosey in his arms, he kissed her soft cheek with an air so sad, that the babe, half frightened, held out her hands to be taken back to her mother. Lily could not win his attention at all, and left the room mortified and vexed ; and Eddy received no answer when he said, "Are you not glad that Geörgie is coming home to-morrow?"

"I'm sure that there's something the matter with that man," said the Thimble, when the sound of the dinner-bell had cleared the room.

"There's something weighing on his heart, you may be sure," observed the Scissors, "for he used to be as merry as a child. I've seen him galloping up and down this very room, with Master Eddy perched upon his shoulders, and Lily scampering at his heels ; and it would have puzzled even our sharp friend the Needle to say which was the liveliest of the three."

"He's in trouble, then," said the Thimble; "I've seen enough of life to know that mortals have their trials, which are to them as the hammer and the furnace to us."

The opinion of our philosophic friend was confirmed that evening, as, when the lamp was lighted, and the curtains drawn, and the children all quiet in bed, the husband and wife sat together in deep, earnest conversation.

"You will hide nothing from me, my beloved," said the lady, laying her hand fondly on his, and looking anxiously into his face. "I have felt for a long time that something was wrong; suspense is worse than the truth could be. I can bear all, all but to see you unhappy, and not be able to lighten, or at least share your trials!"

He drew her closer to him. I could not see his face; it was turned from the place where I lay; and he spoke so low, in a hoarse, agitated voice, that I could catch but few of his words. They were such as "ruin," "bankruptcy," "poverty;" the meaning of which I could scarcely comprehend; but I saw the

lady's cheek grow very pale, though her manner was quiet and composed.

"Well, dearest," she said softly at length, "there are far greater trials than poverty. It will only draw us closer together. I can be happy in a very small abode—a cabin, a hut—so that my dear husband and children are with me. I will be Rosey's nurse myself. We can manage on little; so little, you shall see what a housewife I shall be!"

"Ah!" thought I, as I looked on that sweet, loving face, "the gold indeed looks brightest on the dark ground, and virtue most lovely in affliction."

"It may not come to that; all may yet be well," said the husband, rising and pacing up and down the room. "If I could only meet the present difficulty! A loan at this time would keep us all afloat; one good friend at this crisis might save us."

"George Hardcastle," suggested the lady.

"I have thought of him a thousand times," replied her husband, stopping in his agitated walk. "He is rolling in wealth; he is gen-

erous ; he is our cousin ; our boy was named after him. But then—" He paused, and looked at his wife.

"We have quarrelled with him."

"*I* have quarrelled with him. We have not met for months. I could not stoop to write to him now."

"Not for your children's sake?" said the mother, rising and laying her hand on his arm. "Oh, Edward, we must think of our helpless babes ! Even if he refused to lend money to you, he might, I think that he would, do something for our George."

Mr. Ellerslie uttered a sigh that was almost a groan, and threw himself down on his chair.

"It seems to me as though we should lose no time," continued his anxious wife, "so much is at stake ! Let's see : this is Wednesday," she continued, pressing her hand on her forehead. "I think there are two posts to Bristol ; if we wrote at once, we might have an answer on Friday. Edward, when all depends on it, why should there be one hour's delay ?"

I could see that it went sorely against the will of Mr. Ellerslie to yield to the persuasions of his wife. It seemed to me, from words that dropped from him, that he was conscious of having behaved ill towards his cousin; that he regarded Mr. Hardcastle with a feeling of dislike, and almost preferred remaining in difficulties to asking assistance from him. I saw, though no mortal ever saw it, that Mrs. Ellerslie, had a good deal to endure from her husband, however dear she might be to his heart. What patience she required, what earnest persuasion, to induce his proud spirit to bend so far as to write at all to his offended relative! And then, when the desk was opened, what a painful task was hers to make him write what would not offend, to alter sentences and soften expressions, and stoop to explain the greatness of his need. Often the ink dried on the pen, twice was the half-written sheet pushed angrily away, and bitter things were uttered, even to her whose every look and every tone was love. I scarcely believed that the letter would ever be finished. But finished it was at

last; and Mr. Ellerslie hastily quitted the room, impatient with his wife, with himself, with all the world!

The lady took the sealed letter in her tremulous grasp, folded her hands, and again looked upwards: again her lips moved; and this time the big tears rolled slowly down her cheeks.

“We must do all that we can,” she faintly murmured to herself. “The hearts of men are in His hands. We must leave no proper means untried, and then commit all to a higher Power.”

X.

The Schoolboy's Return.

CONSIDERING the heavy weight of care which I knew lay on the heart of the lady, it was wonderful to me how quietly she went through the ceaseless petty trials of her life.

Lily and Eddy came as usual to their lessons next morning, the former with her dress a good deal torn.

"Please, mamma, nurse says that I want a new frock."

"It is not long since I purchased this, Lily. You must have treated it very carelessly indeed," replied the mother, looking somewhat grave.

"Oh! it's poor stuff!" cried Lily, giving a little pull, which confirmed her assertion, by making the rent a good deal wider.

"There is no use in making it wider, Lily.

I cannot afford to be buying new clothes. We must do the best we can with the old."

"Nurse says that she has no time for mending."

"I think that these lazy little fingers might make themselves useful," said Mrs. Ellerslie, with a gentle smile; "those who mar things ought at least to mend them."

"I cannot mend such a frock!"

"Then *I* must," said the lady.

Lily glanced at her mother's face for a moment; perhaps she saw something there that pricked her conscience a little, for she said in an altered tone, "Dear mamma, I should like to be useful, but I do not like mending at all!"

"Nor do I, my love," answered her mother.

There was nothing more said on the subject at that time. The lessons proceeded as usual. Lily, whose thoughts were very full of the expected arrival of her brother, broke off several times in the midst of her tasks, when she heard the sound of a carriage, and rushed to the window, whither she always was followed

by Eddy, though assured each time that it was impossible that George could arrive till after early dinner.

If Lily had known all that I knew, I can not but think that for once she would have shown some consideration for the teacher, whose mind was so full of troubles and cares ; I cannot but think that she would have known her verse correctly, held up her head, and kept her finger-ends still ; but, as it was, the old story was repeated again, and when lesson-time was over, the child did not even seem conscious that she had been doing anything wrong !

But oh ! the bustle and commotion that there were when a cab, with a black trunk on the coachman's box, did at length actually drive up to the door ! The whole house resounded with the cry, "It is George ! it is George ! he has come !" I heard little Eddy swinging himself down stairs so fast, that it must have been at the peril of his neck ; I believe that the coachman had not even time to ring, so eagerly the door was opened ; and

there was such a medley of eager voices in the hall, that all the neighbourhood must have known of the arrival! I soon saw Mrs. Ellerslie enter the drawing-room, with a colour on her cheek and a sparkle in her eye; her arm was around the neck of her son, and she surveyed him with mingled pride and joy.

I shall not attempt to repeat the conversation which passed; every one seemed so eager to ask questions, that there was scarcely a possibility of reply; but I noticed that whenever his mother spoke, George was instantly silent and attentive; and that though he laughed, played, and chatted merrily with all, his eye most frequently rested on her. Then he had to go up stairs to see the baby, followed, of course, by Lily and Eddy, who pursued him like his shadow; and it was not till an hour or two afterwards that he re-entered the drawing-room with them.

“And now, Georgie, you must show us your prize!” cried Lily, with eager pleasure.

They sat down on the ottoman together,

just as Lizzie and Lily had sat, and Eddy crept up close to his brother. This time no one sent him away.

"A book! what a beauty!" cried Lily; but on turning over some of the pages, she added, with a look of disappointment, "but what a stupid book it must be! all about metals, and things no one cares for!"

"Well, I've been reading a little in the train, and I did not find it stupid at all. It tells one so much that is curious and new. Did you ever hear, Eddy, of metal spoons that would melt in hot tea like sugar?"

Eddy opened his eyes very wide.

"Well, men really make such spoons; I mean that they would, if they thought that any one would buy them,—of a mixture of bismuth, lead, and tin!"

"I never heard of bismuth before," cried Lily.

"It is a white metal, of a reddish-yellow tinge, used with others in making solder for the plumbers. There's the beauty of my book, Lily; it tells one so much that one

never heard of before. Did you know that there was a wine made of steel?"

"Steel wine? Oh yes! that is what mamma has to take every day, to make her strong; but it is not at all nice; it does not taste in the least like other wine."

"Then there's sugar of lead."

"I'd like that!" cried Eddy, smacking his lips at the idea of a sweetmeat.

"Would you, my little man? But it would not like you. Sugar of lead is that metal dissolved in spirit of vinegar; and that, you must know, makes it a poison."

"Well," said Lily, "I always considered lead as a dull, heavy metal, fit for nothing but making water-pipes."

"My book would tell you a different tale. Why, you forget black-lead pencils, and the types used in printing. It is employed also in making clear glass, the varnish on china, and beautiful white paint, for all that it looks so dull! Then it's so odd to think that, from mixing some metals together, you can get quite a new one! Look at the bright brass rods

upon which the curtains are hung; brass is a mixture of copper and zinc."

"They look like gold!" cried Eddy, looking up. "What do people mix to make gold!"

"You funny little philosopher," said George, playfully tapping his brother on the cheek, "that's the very question which for ages puzzled the brains of the learned. They wanted to discover some way to mix up metals and make gold. Even the wonderful Sir Isaac Newton was very anxious to find it out! Men were always searching and searching for what they called 'the philosopher's stone;' and they read old books, and looked at the stars, as if they could see the secret written there; and they kept up fires for years and years, and mixed together all sorts of things; and some spent all their money, and some all their lives, in trying to find out how to make gold!"


"And never found out at last?" inquired Lily.

"It was like running after a rainbow, that

searching for the philosopher's stone. But look at Eddy ; he is yawning, he is not quite a Sir Isaac Newton yet ; so I think, Lily, that we had best shut the book, and be off for a game at hide and seek !”

XI.

Home Hints.

“OU won't do any lessons, George, during the holidays, I suppose?” said Lily, as she slowly and reluctantly brought her lesson-books to her mother the next day.

“That's as mamma likes,” answered George.

“I think,” said Mrs. Ellerslie, replying to his glance, “that as you have been working so hard, my boy, you might indulge in a few days' complete rest.”

“I must not be quite idle,” said George cheerfully; “will you not let me teach Eddy while I am at home?”

“I think that you would be soon tired of the business,” replied Mrs. Ellerslie, with a smile.

“I'll try my skill as a tutor, at least,” and there was a bright look about the boy, which

seemed to say, "I am determined *not* to be tired."

So George set about the task of tuition with wondrous good humor and patience; and Eddy was delighted with his teacher, who really succeeded in persuading him at last that twice two does *not* make three. I must own that Eddy persisted to the end in calling *no on*, and *of for*; but then he was but a little boy, and George said that he would do better in time. It was certainly a relief to Mrs. Ellerslie not to have her attention diverted from Lily; but I could not but fancy, from the anxious, abstracted expression of the poor lady's face, that her own thoughts were often wandering from the lesson to the difficulties of her husband and the expected letter from Bristol.

As soon as studies were over she quitted the room, doubtless glad that the drudgery was ended for the day; and, merry as a bird from a cage, Lily flew to the side of her brother.

"It's raining, so we need not go out. Oh, what a delightful chat we shall have! Just

sit down beside me, Georgie, and tell me how you feel now that you are at home."

"I should feel very happy indeed—but that I think mother is looking very ill."

"Do you?" exclaimed Lily, with a look of alarm. "Well, I hoped that she was better, for she never complains. The doctor saw her about a month ago; he gave her something to strengthen her, and said that she must be taken care of, and then there would be nothing to fear."

"And is she taken care of?" said George.

"Well, I don't know,—I don't see what we can do," replied Lily, looking perplexed; "I would gladly sit up all night, if it could do her any good."

"She does not want any one to sit up with her all night," said George; "but I cannot help thinking that we could do more for her, Lily, than the cleverest doctor could. The lessons are a great fatigue to her, I fear."

"Well, I'm sure that I should be delighted to leave them off, every one of them!" exclaimed his sister.

"That would not do," answered George; "they must be learned; and I am afraid that I could not teach you as well as Eddy. But it does seem to me, Lily," he continued, speaking more slowly and looking on the ground, "that you might save mother just half the trouble that you give her at your lessons."

"I! what do you mean?" said Lily, quickly.

"Well, dear, I don't wish to vex you; but you know that I could not help hearing what went on all the time that you were at your tasks. Mother had to tell you this thing and that—just what, I suppose, she had told you a hundred times before; and you were watching the butterfly fluttering about while she was explaining the rule of three; so of course you did not understand it one bit, and she had to begin from the beginning again. Mother is so kind and gentle,—it seems as though her goodness made you careless. I am sure that you would learn your lessons much better if she had taught you with a rod in her hand."

"George, I never expected this from you!" cried Lily, her eyes filling with tears.

“Forgive me, dear, for speaking so plainly ; but when I look at mother, and see her so thin and pale, I can’t help telling you a little what I think. Now, it’s just like this,” continued George, searching in his mind for a simile. “Suppose that you were lame, and that it was my duty to lift you into baby’s little carriage, and give you a turn round the square.”

“You could manage it, I daresay,” said Lily.

“Ah ! but suppose that, as I was drawing you along, you caught at every bush, and clung to the palings, and held the wheels, so that they could not be turned round.”

Lily could not refrain from laughing. “You would have hard work, Georgie, dragging me along ! But I should never make you so unkind a return, if you were so good as to draw me round the square !”

“And yet, when dear mother gives her time and her strength to getting you on with your learning, you act just as if you wished to make her pull in vain ; and I am sure that

she is just as much tired as I should be after giving such a drive. Now, Lily, I am certain that you love dear mamma—”

“I love her,—I dote on her,—I would do anything for her!” exclaimed the little girl, fairly bursting into tears, for she was much wounded by the words of her brother.

George kissed her again and again, as if angry with himself for having vexed her; but as soon as Lily was more calm, he resumed the subject once more.

“Now, dear, suppose that you and I resolve in future to do our very best to make mother strong and well. There are three things which I think will do her more good than all the steel wine in the world. First, let her never say anything *twice*,—what a saving of her strength that would be! Then let us always determine to think of her pleasure before our own. And lastly, in every little thing, let us save her all the trouble that we can. Oh, Lily, let us only consider what a blessing God has given us in such a parent; we can not love her too much, nor care for

her too much, nor too earnestly try to obey that commandment, '*Honor thy father and thy mother.*' And now you will forgive me for what I have said?" George added, gently laying his hand upon his sister's.

Lily threw her arms around his neck. "George, you are a darling," she exclaimed.

"And so we will be merry again! Come, dry up those eyes, dear Lily; I can not bear to see you cry."

Lily smiled through her tears, dried her eyes, and then, taking her work-box from the table, she drew out her beautiful pen-wiper. "Can you guess for whom this is?" said she; "do you think that it will be pretty when it is done?"

"Very pretty indeed," answered George; "how beautiful the gold looks on the dark blue!"

"It is for a certain brother of mine," said Lily, with an arch, pleasant smile.

"For a brother who will value it very much,—I think that I can answer for that," replied George.

"I'm going to work it now," said the little girl, as she passed a thread through my eye.

"Have you nothing else that you wish to do first, dear Lily?"

"No, nothing;—oh, you are looking at that hole in my dress; but I never mend my own clothes."

"I thought that I heard mother say something about that very hole to-day," observed George, with a little hesitation.

"Well, I suppose that I ought to run it up; but I do so detest mending."

"I wish that I could help you, Lily; but I fear that my fingers are too clumsy. Here is an opportunity for you to begin to follow up your good resolutions. Here is something which you dislike to do; but then your doing it will give pleasure to mother. What is trouble to you will save trouble to her, and you will be so glad when the effort is made."

"Must I put this by?" said Lily, looking sadly at her pen-wiper.

"For a while, dear, only for a while. I shall always look with more pleasure at my beauti-

ful present when I remember that my Lily would not let her own will come before her duty and her love to her mother."

The pen-wiper was replaced in the box, and I felt myself hastily run into the dress.

"I will sit beside you while you work," said George, "and tell you a story, to amuse you."

"A story! a story!" exclaimed Eddy, running up to his brother in high glee at the word.

"Oh, Eddy! what have you been about?—pulling the horse-hair out of the chair!"

"He is always at some mischief," said Lily.

"I think," observed George, "that it must be because he is idle, and can not keep those little fingers still. Now, Eddy, would you not rather be a comfort to mamma, and help her?"

"I do help mamma! exclaimed the little boy, with a look of injured innocence; "I helped her a great deal to pack her box; I wish mamma had a box to pack every day."

"Perhaps mamma would not join in that

wish. But if there is not a box to pack, here is a great skein of wool to wind. Will you hold it on your hands, little man, while I try to find out the knot?"

"He'll let it slip off to a certainty!" cried Lily; "you had much better put it over a chair."

"Will you let it slip off, Eddy," said his brother, "and spoil all the skein for mamma?"

"I'll hold it as tight—as tight as a drum!" cried the child, indignant at his careflessness being doubted. "I will be useful,—I will help mamma!" his face quite flushed as he spoke.

"You'll be her comfort, Eddy, I'm sure of it," said George. "Now, softly; you need not stretch it so hard; just hold your hands a little nearer to the light; I can wind all the time that I am telling the story."

"Oh, how nice it will be! how happy we are! What shall the story be about?" cried Eddy.

"Let me see," said George, shaking out a knot. "Why, Lily, how famously you are

getting on with your hole. We shall be puzzled to find out the place where it was. I think that, in compliment to your work, I will tell you a story of a needle and a compass."

"Of a needle!—oh, what fun!" cried little Eddy. A jovial little fellow he was, and very merry sounded his laugh; but it was not merrier than mine, if the children could have heard it; for never had it entered my thoughts for a moment that any one would ever make a story about me; and I felt amazingly complimented by the idea.

"What sort of needle?" asked Eddy; "a big needle,—a darning needle,—a bodkin?"

"Oh, no!" replied George, with a smile, "we need nothing so grand as that. We'll have a story of a nice little needle, just like that with which Lily is sewing."

With eager curiosity I listened, and the Scissors and the Thimble were all full of attention, as George commenced his story.

XII.

The Story of a Needle and a Compass.

ONCE upon a time, in the days of fairies—

“How long ago?” inquired Eddy.

“Well, you must not ask too particularly about that,” laughed George; “but I suppose that, as there is a compass in my story, it must have been after the compass was invented,—about the thirteenth century, that is to say, though some believe that the Chinese had it more than two thousand years before.”

“But what is a compass?” said Eddy, looking up.

“Oh, Eddy!” cried Lily with impatience, “you must not interrupt us every minute.”

“Poor little fellow, it is very natural that he should like to understand,” observed George.

"I'll try to explain it to you, Eddy. There is a strange substance, called loadstone, dug out of the ground, for which iron has a wonderful fancy. If a lump of it were placed in Lily's work-box, all her needles and scissors, and her keys, if she had any, would jump to it, and cling to it in a minute, just as you would jump into mother's arms!"

"Oh! I wish that I had a lump as big as my head. I should like to see the poker and the tongs and the shovel all jumping!" exclaimed Eddy, full of merriment at the thought.

"And the odd thing is," continued George, "that when iron is well rubbed with this loadstone, it seems as though it grew just like it, for it gets the very same curious property of attracting other bits of iron. One of the boys at my school had a large steel magnet—that is, steel that had been rubbed with the loadstone—and it was the funniest thing in the world to see a dozen needles sticking to it at once, like so many quills upon a porcupine."

"But what has this to do with the compass?" inquired Lily.

"It has a great deal to do with the compass. It has been discovered that magnets, when put in such a position that they can freely move in any direction, are sure always to turn towards the north; so little instruments are formed, holding a small piece of steel made into a magnet, not fixed, but left to tremble and tremble, till, like a tiny finger, it points towards the North Pole."

"What is the use of that?" said Eddy.

"It is of wonderful use," answered George. "Why, only think of poor sailors at sea, when there is nothing but water, wide water around them, and when the clouds hide the sun or the stars, how can they tell which way to steer?"

"I don't know," said Eddy, quite puzzled.

"They look at their clever little compass,—they see in what direction it points,—they know from it where the north and south lie; and the tiny needle serves as a guide."

"What a clever little compass!" cried Eddy; now please go on with your story."

"Well, as I said, once upon a time, in a

beautiful garden, near a beautiful palace, there sported two beautiful children. They were the little son and daughter of a king; and they were brought up with such foolish indulgence, that in all things they had their own way. They did not like spelling, so they never learned to spell; they did not know their tables; they never looked at maps; they could not so much as count their fingers!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Eddy, "the stupid little things!"

"They were not naturally more stupid than others," replied George; "but then they were terribly idle. They were of no use to any one in the world. They did nothing but gather fruit and eat it, and make garlands of pretty flowers, and sing aloud their foolish little song,—

"I love to be idle, I love to be gay,
I'll throw my books and my work away!
From morning till night—all play, all play!"

There was a twinkle in Eddy's merry eye that seemed to say that he felt no surprise at the idle taste of the children.

“Well,” continued George, winding rapidly all the time that he spoke, “one day they were playing together in the garden, when they were surprised to hear a low, soft sound, which came from a bed of flowers. They ran eagerly to the spot, and, standing in the cup of a tulip, a fine tulip, all streaked with crimson and white, what do you think they saw?”

Eddy suspected a wasp or a dragon-fly.

“No; a lovely little fairy, with gossamer wings, all spangled with silver and gold; and she held in her hand a fine glittering wand, not half so big as the tiniest needle!”

“‘Oh! foolish children!’ she cried, in a soft, sweet voice, which sounded like the tinkling of a bell; ‘do you think life was made only for a plaything, and time given to be thrown away in folly! There is work in this world for every one to do, and everything is created for some use. As you have never, with your wills, done any service to mankind, it is your doom to do service without them. Your eyes, your ears, your hands, your tongues, have been given you to no purpose; their powers shall

now be taken quite away ; for seven long years you shall toil in humble estate, till you have learned how great is the value of time, and opportunity to do some good to others !’

“ While the little prince was wondering what the fairy could mean, she stretched her gossamer wings, and flying towards him, she touched him on the face with her wand. A very odd feeling came over him at once. He seemed to be contracting like an Indian-rubber ball, when some one has let out the air. Feet and legs, hands and arms, appeared drawn into his body ; and the body itself became smaller, and rounder, and harder, every minute, till nothing was left of the poor little prince but a mariner’s compass in a neat brass case, with its slender finger trembling, trembling, till it found its resting-place towards the north !”

Eddy opened his blue eyes very wide at the idea of such a strange transformation, and nearly let the skein of wool slip over his fingers.

“ The little girl stood amazed, as you may suppose, at the singular change in her brother.

In her surprise to see him shrink into so curious a shape, she was uttering a cry of dismay, when her tongue, all on a sudden ceased to move, her fingers appeared fastened to her sides, her feet joined together and grew into a point,—she shrank, shrank, as if going to disappear altogether,—till, where the little princess had stood, there only lay on the ground a small needle !”

“Oh! George, what a comical story!” cried Lily, smoothing down the dress, which she now had finished mending.

‘ Please, go on,” exclaimed Eddy; “what did the fairy do next?”

“Turning towards the mariner’s compass, and waving her wand to the sound of strange wild music in the air, she sang the following words:—

“ ‘ Upon the stormy tide
The weary seamen guide,
And point to the North across
The ocean wide!’

Then bending over the needle, she continued the lay,—

“ ‘What is marred, make right;
 What is severed, unite;
 And leave where'er you pass a golden thread of light!’

Then in what manner they were conveyed away I know not, but suddenly the compass found itself on the deck of a ship, and the needle in the work-box of a young lady.”

“That was Lily,” suggested Eddy.

“Oh! as if we lived in the time of the fairies!” exclaimed his sister, now busy again with her pen-wiper.

“Well, we may call industry and affection good fairies,” said George, “for what wonderful changes they make! But to go on with my little story.

“For seven long years the compass and the needle were as clever and useful, and did as much work, as compass and needle could do. The one was tossed on the stormy sea, was nearly lost in a shipwrecked vessel, and when it was deserted by its crew, and almost everything else left behind, they took it with them, as something more precious than gold, and by it were guided to safety! It were endless to

tell all the good deeds of the tiny needle in its quiet little home; how many holes it mended, how many poor it clothed, what beautiful pen-wipers it made," George added, glancing playfully at his sister, "till at last—"

"Well, what happened at last?" said Eddy.

"At last, one lovely summer morn, when all the birds were singing, and the flowers smelling sweet, and the trees waving softly in the air; in the beautiful garden of a beautiful palace, the two beautiful children found themselves again, with their arms closely twined around each other!"

"Had they not grown in all that time?" inquired Lily.

"They had grown wiser, dear, but the years that had passed seemed to them like nothing but a dream; and a dream they would have thought them, so exactly did everything appear as it had done before, had not the same silvery voice come from the centre of a rose, and the same fairy form appeared with spangled wings, and tiny glittering wand!

"Let not the lessons which you have

learned be forgotten!" she cried. "Follow the same path of usefulness, now with your wills as you have lately been doing without them. Let not lifeless brass and steel do more than beings with reason, judgment, and affection. Let the heart still point to the pole-star of duty in every danger and trouble; and your home be cheered by the quiet virtues which adorn the peace-maker, the comforter, the friend!" Then bursting into song as she vanished into air, the fairy's musical voice was heard:—

" ' On life's ocean wide
Your fellow-creatures guide.
And point to a shore beyond the stormy tide!
What is marred, make right;
What is severed, unite;
And leave where'er you pass love's golden thread of light! ' "

"That's a pretty little story!" said Eddy, as his brother wound off the end of his skein. "You must teach me the tiny fairy's song—

'What is marred, make right.'

"Just say it over again once or twice, Georgie."

“What do you think of it?” said I to Mrs. Scissors.

“Oh! you know very well that it is not in my line,” she replied, in a snappish manner; “I sever what is united, and cut right and left! I would not stoop to the office of a needle!”

XIII.

Gold Brought to the Proof.

THE story told by George, however gratifying to my feelings as a needle, did not prevent me from dwelling a good deal on the troubles of his parents, and wondering if any letter had arrived from Bristol. I seldom saw Mr. Ellerslie in the drawing-room, where I was kept, till he returned from business late in the afternoon. This day, when he entered the apartment with his wife, he looked gloomy and anxious as ever.

"There is a late post; we may hear to-night," the lady said. He muttered something, I could not make out what.

Mr. Ellerslie was very irritable that evening; he could scarcely bear the children near him at all. Eddy made a vain attempt to

repeat to him the fairy's song, of which the rhyme had caught the child's fancy. He and his sister were soon sent up to the nursery ; but George, as being older and more quiet, was suffered to remain behind.

Mrs. Ellerslie, with forced cheerfulness, did all that she could to make the heavy time pass pleasantly. She carefully avoided rousing her husband's temper, and when without reason, his peevishness broke forth, she bore it without murmur or complaint, and kept down the tears which struggled to rise. I saw plainly that iron is not the only thing liable to a speck of rust, nor broken-pointed scissors the only articles formed to cut and divide.

Mrs. Ellerslie took up a book, a very amusing volume it was, and read till her voice grew hoarse and faint.

"May I read a little, mother?" said George; "it is good practice for me, you know."

She placed the book in his hand, but it soon became evident that George was not accustomed to read aloud. He never varied his tone,

missed the short words and pronounced the long, and certainly made a very poor figure as a reader.

"How you drawl! it is a penance to hear you!" cried his father.

"Shall I take the book now?" said Mrs. Ellerslie faintly.

George was flushed. I could see that he felt his father's taunt. I believe that he would gladly have given up the reading; but his mother's feeble tone seemed to touch his heart, and still retaining his hold of the volume, he said, "If you please, I would rather try a little longer; I will try to read better if you will let me."

"There's the post!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellerslie, with a start, as the double rap was suddenly heard.

George saw that his mother was anxious: he sprang out of the room in a moment.

Mr. Ellerslie rose, as if too impatient to be able to sit still. His wife clasped her trembling hands, but neither of them uttered a word till George returned with a letter.

"The Bristol post-mark!" muttered Mr. Ellerslie, as he broke the seal.

"George, my son," said the lady, "go to the dining-room for a few minutes. You can take the book with you if you like."

George instantly obeyed, without speaking; and Mrs. Ellerslie fixed her blue eyes, with a look of intense anxiety, on the changing countenance of her husband.

"There—read it," he exclaimed, when he had finished perusing the letter; "what do you say, Eliza, to that?" and he threw himself again on his chair.

"He writes kindly of George," said the mother, after looking over the first page of the letter,—"*I was much pleased with what I saw of your boy last year,—I don't forget that he is my name-sake.*" The poor mother's face brightened up.

"Read on," said her husband abruptly.

"It does not seem that he declines to assist you," said the lady, still anxiously endeavoring to make out the crabbed hand-writing before her; "on the contrary he writes, "*I*

shall have a large sum at your disposal, such as I think will remove every difficulty.' "

"There's an *if* to that. Read on a little farther."

"Oh, Edward!" exclaimed the lady, almost dropping the letter, "can he ask us to give up our boy—our dear son!"

"He offers to adopt him as his own."

"My George! oh! no, no, no!—we can never, never consent to that!"

Why, you see, Eliza," said her husband, speaking rapidly, "if I have not assistance now, all will be ruin,—I shall have no means of supporting my family. Perhaps this is the best thing for George himself—"

"I can hardly think it," said the mother, with a look of intense pain. "Hardcastle gives us to understand that the separation from our boy must be '*complete—final*,'—these are his very words,—that '*George must not look to two fathers or two homes—*' "

"Hardcastle dislikes me," muttered Mr. Ellerslie to himself.

"And even if we could bear to part," con-

tinued his wife with something like a stifled sob, "Hardcastle is not one to whom our boy could look up with the affection—the reverence—;" she stopped for a moment, as if to swallow down her tears. "Hardcastle has temper, he is strange, eccentric. Our George would be wretched with him. Oh, no! it can not be!" she added with energy; "it would be like sacrificing—selling our child!"

"If we refuse Hardcastle's offer," said her husband, "we offend him for ever; and you know the consequences, Eliza."

She sat with her hand pressed over her eyes, while Mr. Ellerslie continued to speak.

"He can afford George advantages, comforts, which it would not be in our power to bestow. I am not certain whether, all selfish motives set aside, the boy would not be happier at Bristol than here."

"Let us consult George himself," said the unhappy mother. "On a question which concerns the welfare of his whole life, we at least should know what are the poor child's feelings."

"I have no objection," replied the father, walking to the door; "but you must command yourself, Eliza. This is weak, foolish—not what I expected from you. We must think calmly, and decide firmly, and not give way to emotions which injure ourselves and can do good to none.—George!" he called out, after opening the door, while his wife, after one look of anguish, such as I never can forget, sat quiet and submissive on the sofa, like one whose spirit is broken and crushed.

"Did you call me, father?" said George, as he entered with his light step and cheerful glance.

"Yes; I wish to speak to you, my boy. You remember your visit to Bristol last summer?"

"That I do!" replied the school-boy with a meaning smile; "I know that I was precious glad when it was over!"

"You had nothing to complain of,—Mr. Hardcastle was kind?"

"Well, kind after his fashion," said George,

with a little hesitation. "I did not mean to say anything against him. But what with the smoke and the dirt, and the noise of the great manufactory close by, and the ways of the house,—not one bit like ours,—I know that I felt like a bird in a cage, and was heartily glad when I was set free!"

"I knew it!" murmured the mother; but I believe that no one overheard her but myself.

Mr. Ellerslie knitted his brow. "Hardcastle wishes you to go to him," he said.

"Not another visit, I hope?" exclaimed George with animation; "you do not know how much I should hate it."

"Not for a visit,—he would have you for good and all."

"But he won't get me!" cried the school-boy with playful confidence. "I would not change my own dear home for that smoky prison, no, not for all England—and Ireland to boot!"

"He shall not go!—oh, Edward, he cannot go!" exclaimed the mother, rising and throw-

ing her arms round her son, and pressing him convulsively to her heart. "I would sooner starve than send him away!"

George was startled and alarmed at the sight of her agitation, and looked anxiously at his father for an explanation of an emotion which he could not understand.

"It is as well that he should know all," said Mr. Ellerslie; "let the boy decide for himself.—George, driven by circumstances which I need not explain, I have asked a favor of Mr. Hardcastle, on which the comfort, the independence, I may say the very living, of this family depend. This is his answer; read it." He pushed the letter across the table to George.

All the healthy glow in the boy's cheek faded away as he slowly made out the closely-written scrawl. His father folded his arms, and fixed his gaze sternly on the carpet; but his mother watched him with glistening eyes. George stopped more than once as he read, as if to make sure that he rightly understood, and repeated the words "*final and complete*

separation" as he might have done a sentence of death. When he had finished he laid down the letter, and turning towards the sofa, said, in a low, agitated tone, "Mother, what would you wish me to do?"

She buried her face in her hands.

"Do not further distress your mother," said Mr. Ellerslie, rising with emotion. "I leave the question in your own hands, George; I will never dispose of you without your own consent:" and as he spoke I thought that the hand which he laid on the shoulder of his first-born trembled.

George had evident difficulty in speaking. He could scarcely command his voice. I expected him to break down every moment; but he manfully struggled with his feelings.

"I should like one night, dear father, to think over it, before I make up my mind. Mr. Hardcastle says in his postscript"—he took up the letter and read: "*As business takes me to London, I shall arrive almost as soon as my letter, and will see you on Saturday morning;*" so doubtless he will be here to-morrow. May

I wait till the morning before I give you my answer?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Ellerslie, with a heavy sigh. "You had better retire to rest now; it is late. I shall wait at home to-morrow to see Hardcastle when he calls. You will tell me your wishes in the morning. George, my dear boy, good-night."

He pressed his son for a moment closely to his breast, and then himself rapidly quitted the room. George sprang to the side of his mother.

"Mother—darling mother!" his arms were around her, his head buried on her bosom.

"Oh, George, my heart will break—will break! I cannot part with you!—I can never consent!"

"We will think, we will reflect over it, mother."

"And pray—oh, my child! we will pray!"

XIV.

Conclusion.

“**T**HAT’S right, Lily, place the books ready; get everything right for dear mother,” said George, as with a step and manner, oh, how changed! he entered the drawing-room the next morning.

“I want you to see that I do not forget your advice. I am going to be a real comfort to mamma.”

“And so am I!” cried Eddy with glee;—

“My healthy arm shall be her stay,
And I will wipe her tears away!”

He stopped short, and stared in wonder at his brother. “Are you going to cry, Georgie?” he exclaimed.

“What is the matter, George, dear George?” cried Lily, looking alarmed.

“Sit down beside me, dear Lily and Eddy,” said George, when he had recovered his voice. “I want to speak with you quietly and seriously,—I want to speak to you about our dear parents.”

“But is anything the matter?” repeated Lily.

“I am going to leave you—I am going to Bristol,—I—”

He was interrupted by a passionate exclamation from Lily, and something like a howl from Eddy.

“I wish you to take my place—to be to those dear parents all that I once hoped to be ; to obey them cheerfully, without a murmur ; to try to find out their wishes, even before they can speak them ; to—”

“But you shan’t go, Georgie ; I won’t let you go !” cried Eddy, seizing his brother’s arm with both his hands, as if to detain him by force.

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and George turned very pale at the sound. The next minute Mrs. Ellerslie entered

the drawing-room to receive the expected visitor. The lady's eyes looked swollen and red, and her form drooped like a withering flower. Eddy popped a cushion on her chair and Lily drew a foot-stool before it.

Mr. Ellerslie, whose voice had been heard on the stairs in conversation with some one whose cracked, peculiar tones grated harshly on the ear, now threw open the door and followed into the apartment a little shrunken figure, dressed in a snuff-colored coat, considerably the worse for wear. I could not wonder, when I looked at the visitor, at poor George's reluctance to exchange the society of all whom he loved so well for that of his cousin at Bristol. There was something shabby, mean, even dirty, in his appearance, which gave the impression that he was out of place in a gentleman's house: while a terrible squint in his left eye, and a strange twitch in his face, which set Eddy laughing, made his countenance the reverse of agreeable.

Mr. Hardcastle, in an uncouth, awkward manner, shook hands with Mrs. Ellerslie,

nodded to Lily, and chucked Eddy good-humoredly under the chin; then, clapping George heartily on the back, he said, "So, my man, you are going back with me to Bristol! That's right. See that your trunk is packed by Monday; we'll be off by the early train."

"I shall be ready, sir," answered the boy.

Mr. Hardcastle sat down, pulled out his snuff-box, took a pinch of its contents, part of which he bestowed on the carpet, then held out the box to Eddy, who examined with interest the picture on the lid.

"I'll arrange it with you, Ellerslie, to day," said the old gentleman; "we'll go to the city together, make all right, set all smooth. "He passed his fingers through his hair, and stretched out his legs with an air of satisfaction. in marvellous good humor with himself.

"I am very sensible how much I am indebted to you," began Mr. Ellerslie, making an effort to speak.

"Say nothing about it, say nothing about it,—it's all settled and done. When a man comes half way to meet me, why it's my way

to go the other half to meet him. Eh, George?" he added, as if appealing to the boy, who stood silently and sadly leaning against the arm of the sofa.

George's answer was a half-suppressed sigh.

"You look glumpish," said the old gentleman, fixing the eye which did not squint on the boy. "You don't wish to go with me, eh?"—the cracked voice had impatience in its tone.

"I wish to do—whatever is best for my parents."

"But you don't like going, eh?" said Mr. Hardcastle, resting his bony hands on his knees, and leaning forward with a look of peevish irritability.

"I cannot like—leaving my home for another," answered George, gravely; "but I am ready to do it,—I do not complain."

Mr. Hardcastle continued his sharp scrutiny of the boy's countenance, as if he would read him through and through. There was a painful moment of silence,—it was broken by little Eddy.

"You shan't take away George," said he, going close to the old man, and looking earnestly up into his face.

"I shan't! shall I not? and why not, my little man?" said Mr. Hardcastle, lifting the child on his knee.

"Because—because—Georgie must not be sent far away like the compass, but stay here at home like the needle."

"Like what!" exclaimed Mr. Hardcastle, laughing.

"It's a story Georgie told us," said the child, pulling the buttons on the coat of the old gentleman.

"Let's hear his story, by all means, my dear."

Poor Eddy looked exceedingly puzzled, for he had very little command of language, and did not know how to put his thoughts into words. At last he said, "Georgie told it to make us good, and busy, and kind, and a comfort to papa and mamma."

"Ah! that must have been a capital story! I should like to hear you tell me all about it."

"Eddy," said his father, "How can you plague Mr. Hardcastle with your nonsense?"

"I beg your pardon, he does not plague me at all. It amuses me to hear what the little fellow has to say. So out with your improving story, Master Eddy!"

Poor Eddy turned round and looked at his brother; but George seemed disposed to render him no assistance. He glanced at Lily,—she would not utter a word. He was left to his own resources.

"Well, once upon a time," he began, but stopped short. "I can't tell a story," said the child; "it is too hard—I can only remember a bit of the fairy's pretty song."

"A little is better than nothing," cried the old gentleman, much amused at the perplexed look of the child. "Let's hear what the fairy sang."

"It was something about what we all should do, Georgie said. It made me think I should like to do it too. This was it;" and keeping time with his fore-finger he slowly repeated,—

"What is marred, make right;
What is severed, unite;

And leave where'er you pass love's golden thread of light!"

The hard features of the old man softened as he listened to the lisping child. "That's the song, is it?" said he, stroking Eddy's locks in rather an abstracted manner. "What is severed unite," he repeated to himself;—"here it is, *What is united sever!*" and he glanced at George and his mother.

"That won't do at all," said Eddy, over-hearing him; "that sounds bad,—shocking bad!"

"Does it?" said Mr. Hardcastle, laughing. "Well, I really believe that it does. So George teaches you to be busy, and obedient, and kind, and makes you all happy; does he, eh?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Eddy, jumping down and running up to his brother.

"It would be a shame to part you, then, it would be a shame!" said the old man, rising, "No, no, I am not so bad as that! George, stay with your parents; you are an honor to them, my boy! stay and be a comfort and blessing in your home!—And now, Ellerslie, shall we start for the city?"

I shall not attempt to describe the deep,

intense joy which followed the utterance of these few words, the delight which sparkled in the eyes of George, or the fervent exclamation of thankfulness from his mother!—but none looked merrier than the kind-hearted old man himself, unless it were our little friend Eddy.

I have often thought of that scene since, and talked it over with the Thimble. She has become too small for Lily's finger now, but occupies a quiet corner in the box. The broken-pointed Scissors I have lost sight of for years. Lily has grown into a sweet, gentle young maiden, ever watchful to show kindness to those who need it, ever thoughtful of the feelings of others. Her mother speaks of her now as her "right hand;" and the bloom has returned to the lady's pale cheek, and her brow is calm and serene. George has entered the Church, I understand; and Eddy, like the compass in the story, is pursuing his way on the wide ocean. But I have reason to believe that, in their different paths, both are pressing forward to the same happy goal, and in their intercourse with the world, as well as

in their peaceful home, are living in the spirit
of the song,—

“ ‘ On life’s ocean wide
Your fellow-creatures guide.

And point to a shore beyond the stormy tide!

What is marred, make right;

What is severed, unite;

And leave where’er you pass love’s golden thread of light!’ ”

THE END.





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